UNITED STEELWORKERS



UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS

District 11

Emil Ramirez
District Director

John Rebrovich Assistant to the Director

March 20, 2015

Mr. Shaun McGrath, Administrator USEPA Region 8 1595 Wynkoop St. Denver, CO 80202-1129

RE: COLUMBIA FALLS ALUMINUM COMPANY SITE

Dear Administrator McGrath:

The United Steelworkers (USW) represents 850,000 workers in North America employed among industries that include metals, rubber, chemicals, paper, oil refining, plus the service and public sectors. As a labor union, we understand that safe communities and safe workplaces go hand in hand. We have a long history of advocating for cleaning up work places from toxic releases on behalf of our members who work in smelters and live in surrounding communities.

In keeping with our philosophy that a sustainable economy is dependent upon a sustainable environment, we are writing to express our strong support to list the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company smelter site on the Superfund National Priority List (NPL). As you know, the current owner, Glencore, ceased operation of the smelter in October of 2009 and on March 3, 2015, announced that they would not reopen the facility.

While the extent of contamination has not been fully characterized, initial investigations revealed the need for remediation of groundwater and soils. This site should not continue to languish and increase the risk of contaminant migration, particularly since cyanide was detected in two of five residential wells tested—one to the north and one to the southwest of the site.

We believe that adding this site to the Superfund NPL will ensure a comprehensive remedial investigation/feasibility study and subsequent cleanup. Such actions are necessary to adequately protect public and environmental health, as well as area property values.

It is time to turn this abandoned, contaminated site into a valuable asset. Remediation of the property may provide opportunities for local employment and will make the property a safe, attractive area for the establishment of future businesses and long-term employment. We thank you in advance for considering placing this site on the NPL.

Sincerely,

Emil Ramirez

Director, USW District 11

ER:jmr

United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union

2929 University Ave SE, Suite 150, Minneapolis, MN 55414 • 612-623-8003 • 612-623-8840 (fax) • www.usw.org